

MINUTES

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission Meeting

Montana State University-Northern / ATC Hensler Auditorium

300 West 11th Street - Havre, MT

June 5, 2013

~Corrected~

Commission Members Present: Dan Vermillion, Chairman, Matthew Tourtlotte, Richard Stuker,
Lawrence Wetsit

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Staff Present: Jeff Hagener, Director and FWP Staff.

Guests: June 5, 2013 - See Commission file folder for sign-in sheet.

Topics of Discussion:

1. Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Minutes of May 9, 2013 Commission Meeting
3. Approval of Commission Expenses
4. Commission Reports
5. Director's Report
6. Vice-Chairman Selection
7. Lena Lake Bag Limit Waiver – Final
8. Florence Bridge FAS and Bitterroot River Closures - Final
9. Clark Fork River and Warm Springs Wildlife Management Area Closure Rules - Final
10. Blackfoot River Fishing Regulations Change - Repeal
11. Pine Grove Pond FAS Addition – Endorsement
12. 2013 Elk Quotas Outside Biennial Quota Ranges – Proposed
13. 2013 Lion Quotas – Final
14. 2013 Furbearer Quotas – Proposed
15. 2013 Bison Quotas – Proposed

16. Elk Harvest Prescriptions in Archery Elk Units – Proposed
17. HD 304 Big Horn Sheep Closure – Final
18. Public Comment – For Issues Not On This Agenda

1. Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Vermillion called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of the Commission Meeting Minutes of May 9, 2013

Commissioner Stuker asked to change his question on page 285 to say “why that portion of WMU 390 was not included in WMU 316.”

Action: Commissioner Wetsit and Commissioner Tourtlotte seconded the motion to approve the May 9, 2013 minutes with amendment. Motion carried.

3. Approval of Commission Expenses

Action: Commissioner Tourtlotte moved and Commissioner Stuker seconded the motion to approve the Commission expenses.

Chairman Vermillion stated the expenses report reflects the tablets and accessories and will be a cost savings in the future.

Motion Carried.

4. Commission Reports

Commissioner Wetsit received correspondence on the Carver court case and an article on FWP ignoring public comments on wolf trapping.

Commission Stuker stated he received copies of the same letters as Commissioner Wetsit; attended Bailey Reservoir Fishing Access Site (FAS) grand opening, very worthwhile project for FWP; received phone calls regarding Milk River Ranch.

Commissioner Tourtlotte stated Paddlefishing closed in Region 7 and was a very successful season; received correspondence regarding wolves and Marias River WMA.

Chairman Vermillion received correspondence regarding wolves; explained new fishing regulations in Yellowstone National Park; a lot of calls on the Marias River; received new petition regarding trapping; appreciated Havre residents for their discussions during the informal meeting.

5. Director's Report

Director Hagener thanked the Havre residents, good discussions; local working group will be formed to help with this acquisition. Gave update on new Legislative bills; stated the new State Park and Recreation Board takes effect July 1. Sage Grouse Task Force meetings have begun; Regional meetings are moving forward and Citizen Advisory Councils are becoming active; will keep Commissioners informed on upcoming meetings. Department is receiving substantial amount of wolf comments from both sides.

6. Vice-Chairman Selection

Tabled until fifth Commissioner is appointed.

Bruce Rich, Fisheries Administrator gave an update on the state water supply.

7. Lena Lake Bag Limit Waiver – Final

Bruce Rich, Fisheries Administrator explained at the May Commission meeting a proposed rule waiving the daily bag limit for trout in Lena Lake, a 74-acre lake located at the headwaters of the Big Salmon drainage in northwest Montana. Lena Lake is part of the South Fork Flathead Cutthroat Conservation Plan's initiative to replace rainbow and Yellowstone cutthroat trout with pure westslope cutthroat (WCT) in 21 lakes in the South Fork Flathead drainage to maintain WCT genetic purity. The project to date has successfully chemically treated 11 lakes and 6 more lakes are being stocked with genetically pure westslope and Lena Lake is scheduled for chemical treatment in September 2013. The proposed bag limit waiver would allow more opportunity for anglers to harvest trout before they are subject to removal through chemical

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treatment; the current limit is three trout per day. FWP received one comment in favor of the proposed bag limit waiver. This is consistent with the positive comments that FWP has received for similar bag limit waivers prior to chemical treatments associated with this project. This proposal would satisfy the public's desire to minimize the waste of fish and build public support for the program. There have been no known problems with previous limit waivers.

Action: Commissioner Stuker moved and Commissioner Tourtlotte seconded to adopt a rule that removes the combined trout daily and possession bag limits for Lena Lake, effective immediately and terminating on August 31, 2013.

Commissioner Tourtlotte strongly supports rule.

Commissioner Wetsit asked what kind of chemical is used and if the lake drains into the south fork of Flathead.

Rich explained Rotenone, a natural plant root from South America, is used and the chemical breaks down naturally. Have established a system working with lakes, where outlets drain from water that is being treated.

Commissioner Stuker asked if there is a power point or video explaining the process.

Rich stated he is not aware of any power point readily available.

Chairman Vermillion explained in the past this was very controversial; is better accepted now. This system helps keep species off the endangered species list.

Motion Carried.**8. Florence Bridge FAS and Bitterroot River Closures - Final**

Charlie Sperry, Fisheries Recreational Management Specialist explained at the April meeting the Commission proposed an annual rule that would close a portion of the Florence Bridge Fishing Access Site (FAS) and give the Department, with approval from the local Commissioner, the authority to close the entire site and a section of the Bitterroot River for public safety. As early as August 1, 2013, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is scheduled to begin replacing the Florence Bridge over the Bitterroot River near Florence, Montana and will occur over the next two years; will include road improvements in the immediate vicinity of the bridge. The heavily-used Florence Bridge FAS is located adjacent to the bridge and highway right-of-way and will be used by workers and equipment. MDT has requested that FWP close a portion of the FAS that is in close proximity to the bridge and highway right-of-way due to safety concerns over people entering the work zone. Bridge construction will require crews to conduct some work within the river channel such as during the construction of coffer dams, the construction of work bridges and potential blasting of old bridge piers. MDT contract provisions stipulate that the contractor must provide safe public float passage through the construction site, including a 40' wide x 6' high effective opening between instream construction-related obstructions, and must provide appropriate navigational signage and hazard posting. MDT anticipates there may be times when construction activities will create unsafe conditions for river users. The proposed rule would give FWP, with approval from the local FWP Commissioner, the authority to temporarily close the river up to 1000 feet above and 1000 feet below the construction site to address public safety concerns. FWP received one comment; concerned about potential damage to the beach area within the proposed closed section. FWP recommends that Commission adopt the rule with amended language that states the closed section of the fishing access site is up to 150 feet from the bridge, as posted. This amendment would allow on-site adjustments to accommodate public safety and recreation interests. Overall, the rule would enable FWP to address public safety concerns as they occur but still allow unrestricted recreation most of the time.

Action: Commissioner Wetsit moved and Commissioner Stuker seconded to adopt the annual rule as amended, closing a portion of the Florence Bridge FAS and granting the Department and the local Commissioner the authority to close the entire site and the Bitterroot River 1000 feet above and below the bridge if conditions become unsafe.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Motion Carried.**9. Clark Fork River and Warm Springs Wildlife Management Area Closure Rules – Final**

Charlie Sperry, Fisheries Recreational Management Specialist explained at the April meeting the Commission proposed a rule that would close a 1.75 mile section of the Clark Fork River and a portion of the Warm Springs Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is conducting a cleanup project to remove contaminated soils in the streambanks and historic floodplain within the Clark Fork River near the community of Warm Springs. The project is part of the Milltown Reservoir/Clark Fork River Superfund Site. The first phase of construction, initiated in March of this year, begins at the river's headwaters below Warm Springs Ponds and proceeds downstream for

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approximately 1.75 river miles and will last approximately one year. Heavy equipment is being used to remove heavy metals and arsenic contaminated soils, and to conduct streambank revegetation. Haul trucks and heavy equipment are using a road within the Warm Springs WMA, which is adjacent to the north boundary of the project area. This portion of the Clark Fork River is a popular catch-and-release brown trout fishery and anglers were entering the construction area and encountering heavy equipment in close proximity and encountering haul trucks and other heavy equipment on the WMA road, which is too narrow to accommodate construction equipment and public vehicles at the same time. This situation presented a serious public safety concern and DEQ requested FWP implement an emergency closure and FWP concurred that there was an imminent threat to public safety and adopted an emergency closure rule on March 29, 2013. By statute, an emergency rule may be in effect no longer than 120 days, which means the emergency rule will expire on July 26, 2013; Phase 1 of the cleanup project will continue past this date, which necessitates continuing the closure beyond the July 26, 2013 date. FWP received one comment that supports the proposed closure and the work being done to clean up the area.

Action: Commissioner Tourtlotte moved and Commissioner Stuker seconded to adopt an annual rule closing 1.75 river miles of the Clark Fork River, 10 acres of the Warm Springs WMA, and 1/3 mile of the WMA road.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Motion Carried.

10. Blackfoot River Fishing Regulations Change – Repeal

Bruce Rich, Fisheries Administrator explained in 2006, the FWP Commission adopted fishing regulations that closed the Blackfoot River to fishing from the confluence with the Clark Fork to about 1 ½ miles upstream and closed the Clark Fork River to fishing from about 2 ½ miles upstream from the confluence of the Blackfoot River to about ½ mile downstream. These fishing regulations were adopted to coincide with rules that prohibited floating in these sections of the river and occupancy of the banks adjacent to the river. The rules were necessary to address safety concerns during construction activities associated with the removal of Stimson and Milltown Dams, old bridge piers, and thousands of saw logs. At the April 2013 meeting, the Commission amended the Blackfoot River closure rule to allow public occupation of the banks for recreation; boating, floating and swimming remains prohibited due to ongoing safety concerns. The Commission also repealed the Clark Fork River closure, while retaining the closure on public use of the vegetated banks for restoration purposes and closure signs along both rivers were subsequently removed, and the public has been using both rivers accordingly. Inadvertently, the Department did not request the Commission repeal the fishing regulation closures on these two rivers. Public comment was taken to allow public access on both rivers, and all comments supported increased public access to the area.

Action: Commissioner Stuker moved and Commissioner Tourtlotte seconded to repeal the fishing regulation that closed the Blackfoot River to fishing from the confluence with the Clark Fork River to about 1 ½ miles upstream, and repeal the fishing regulation that closed the Clark Fork River to fishing from about 2 ½ miles upstream from the confluence of the Blackfoot River to about ½ mile downstream.

Chairman Vermillion asked when the change would take effect.

Rich stated immediately.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Motion Carried.

11. Pine Grove Pond FAS Addition – Endorsement

Bruce Rich, Fisheries Administrator explained in 2010, the Department acquired the 13-acre Pine Grove Pond FAS property through donation and is a very popular children's fishing pond with approximately 10,000 visitor days each year. The Whitefish Credit Union owns a narrow strip of land that is located between the Pine Grove Pond FAS and the Whitefish River. The parcel is part of a larger piece of property that the Credit Union intends to sell and is interested in donating the 7± acre parcel to the Department. Acquisition of this parcel would enable the public to gain access to the Whitefish River from the FAS. With the Commission's endorsement to proceed with this acquisition, the Department would conduct an environmental review and solicit public comments.

Action: Commissioner Tourtlotte moved and Chairman Vermillion seconded to endorse FWP's request to pursue the Whitefish Credit Union's offer to donate a parcel of land adjoining the Pine Grove Pond fishing access site.

Commissioner Stuker stated this is very beneficial for the community and strongly supports.

Chairman Vermillion thanked the Whitefish Credit Union and asked the Department to do the same.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Motion Carried.

12. 2013 Elk Quotas Outside Biennial Quota Ranges – Proposed

George Pauley, Wildlife Game Management Bureau Chief explained field surveys and analysis have identified one proposed quota change outside the biennial range adopted in February 2012; 799-80 increase antlerless B licenses from 200 to 400. All other changes are within the adopted biennial quota ranges, and are not presented here. Public comment period for the adopted proposal will run through Friday, July 5, with final adoptions at the July 10 Commission meeting.

Action: Commissioner Tourtlotte moved and Commissioner Stuker seconded the FWP Commission adopt the proposed adjustment to the 799-80 elk quota outside the biennial range as proposed by FWP.

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Commissioner Stuker stated he had conversations with individuals at the open house regarding the influx of hunters on the Milk River Ranch; asked the Department to look into allowing a number of hunters in at a certain time, understands there is something similar at Marias River Ranch.

Pauley duly noted Commissioner Stuker's comment.

Chairman Vermillion commented on HD 799 cow harvest success rate is consistently below elk objections; need to stay focused on changing objectives so numbers are current and accurate.

Brad Schmitz, Region 7 Supervisor explained past and present efforts regarding elk in this area.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Motion Carried.

13. 2013 Lion Quotas – Final

George Pauley, Wildlife Game Management Bureau Chief explained Hunting Districts (HDs) have proposed changes from 2012 quotas and subquotas. All other quotas/subquotas not listed are proposed to be unchanged from 2012 levels. Formal public comment ran through May 20; received 79 comments, mostly in support of the increased mountain lion quotas.

Watershed	Hunting District	Harvest Quota		Special Licenses							
		Female	Male								
			2012	2013 Tent.	2013 New	2012	2013 Tent	2012	2013 Tent	2013 New	
Lower Clark Fork	200 & 201		10	9	12	10	9	20	18	21	
	202 & 203		15	14	19	15	14	30	28	33	
Bitterroot	204, 260 & 261		2	2	3	5	2	10	4	5	
	240		3	2	3	5	2	10	4	5	
	250		7	4	6	7	4	14	8	10	
	270		7	4	6	7	4	14	8	10	

Blackfoot	280, 281, 284 & 293	7	5	7	7	5	14	10	12
	283 & 285	8	5	7	8	5	16	10	12
	290, 291, 292, 293 & 298	7	4	6	7	5	14	9	11
Upper Clark Fork	210	0	0	0	7	3	7	3	3
	211 & 216	2	2	3	5	5	7	7	8
	212 & 215	0	0	0	6	6	6	6	6
	213 & 214	1	1	1	2	2	3	3	3
Totals		69	52	73	91	66	165	118	139

Region 6 - Increase the Region 6 except 680 & 690 quota from 3 to 4 with female subquota of 2

Region 7 - Increase the Region 7 quota from 30 to 35

Action: Commissioner Stuker moved and Commissioner Wetsit seconded to adopt the proposed 2013 lion quotas/subquotas as presented by FWP.

Chairman Vermillion asked if the research was not available at the time of the tentative; a lot of concern over the dramatic changes.

Pauley stated the DNA research analysis results were just finalized; gave a lengthy discussion on how and why the quotas were adjusted. The results conclusively demonstrate that fewer than 38 adult female lions were present in HD 250 and 270 at the start of the 2012-13 winter season and confirmed Region 2's conservative assumption of adult female lion numbers in the Upper Bitterroot has been at least 39% lower than the actual minimum number of adult females that have been counted. The female lion harvests that FWP prescribed and achieved in the 2012-13 season did not accomplish the Commission endorsed objective of a 10% decrease in the lion population, nor would the proposed harvest contained in the Commission's tentative adoption for the upcoming 2013-14 season accomplish that stated objective.

Chairman Vermillion stated he has spoken with different groups that stated in the past the actual quota number did not represent the actual number harvested.

Pauley explained per policy, only legal harvest counts towards the quota.

Chairman Vermillion asked what the non-mortality numbers were last year in HD 250 and 270.

Mike Thompson, Region 2 Wildlife Manager explained there were eight female incidental mortalities; explained the reasoning behind the changes and future quotas.

Chairman Vermillion and Mike Thompson had a lengthy conversation regarding past and current objectives.

Chairman Vermillion stated it is important the Department makes its quota. Asked when the decision has to be made regarding the changes.

Pauley stated the deadline is near; regulations will be printed soon.

Chairman Vermillion stated he is uncomfortable and concerned with the changes; wants the Department to report back to the Commission at the January 2014 meeting with update on quotas.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Steve Schindler, Montana Bowhunters Association agrees with proposal.

Motion Carried.

14. 2013 Furbearer Quotas – Proposed

George Pauley, Wildlife Game Management Bureau Chief explained the furbearer season structure is defined by FWP Commission adoption every two years and harvest quotas are set annually. Season structure for 2012 and 2013 were finalized in August 2012. Proposed changes to 2013 annual furbearer harvest quotas are below, with other species quotas proposed as unchanged from 2012. The public comment period for any adopted proposals will run through Monday, July 22, and comment will be allowed at the July Commission meeting, with final adoption at the August 8 meeting.

Increase the bobcat quota in Trapping District 1 from 250 to 275

Reduce the bobcat quota in Trapping District 4 from 300 to 200

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Due to uncertainty with the wolverines' status under the Endangered Species Act, FWP is currently recommending changing the quota from 5 to 0. FWP may seek to adjust this at the October 2013 Commission meeting, public comment will be taken and final rule would be considered at the November 2013 Commission meeting.

Increase the swift fox quota in a portion of Trapping District 6 from 20 to 30

Furbearer species quota adjustments, there is a proposed adoption of a 300 foot setback requirement for all ground sets on public land for identified and specific high recreational use trails.

Pauley explained it is mandatory for trappers to report dog captures. Four dogs were captured in wolf traps; all on private land; three were at large. Twenty three dogs were caught in coyote sets not regulated by FWP. In addition, ten dogs were caught in furbearer sets; three on private land; four at large; two in illegal sets. Three dogs were caught in traps while under the control of their owner. A lot of education is being done to protect incidental captures.

Action: Commissioner Wetsit moved and Commissioner Stuker seconded to adopt the proposed 2013 furbearer quotas and setbacks as proposed by FWP.

Commission Tourtlotte stated he is not comfortable stating the risk is low and has a level of concern. Not going to alleviate dog owners concern with the 300 foot setback.

Pauley stated the Department could look at a different setback.

Chairman Vermillion recommends the Department, Commission and Trappers Association work together to address trapping concerns. Commissioner Stuker asked what the negative is of having additional set-backs.

Pauley stated he feels there are no negatives.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment and stated the public will be able to comment at the July meeting also.

John Hughes, Montana Trapper Association, supports setbacks. Wants to work with all parties, does not want conflict.

Chairman Vermillion stated he believes conversations are worth having with everyone involved; feels an informal working group would be beneficial.

Kurt Knudsen, Montana Trappers Association D-6 Director, supports setbacks and swift fox quota, step in the right direction; stated he receives death threats and loses numerous dollars a year in theft.

Chairman Vermillion stated he is comfortable with the 300 foot set-back and the set-back is not state-wide. A lot of misunderstanding about trapping, conversation will help this.

Commissioner Stuker asked who controls the coyote.

Pauley explained stated the Department of Livestock (DOL) is responsible for coyote/predator control.

Becky Jakes Dockter, Chief Legal Counsel explained the statute regarding FWP's and DOL's obligation concerning coyotes.

Chairman Vermillion stated the DOL should be involved.

Director Hagener explained the Department has had discussions with DOL regarding this issue.

Motion Carried.

15. 2013 Bison Quotas – Proposed

George Pauley, Wildlife Game Management Bureau Chief explained in 2007, Montana's bison season allowed for an adaptive response to significant bison movement out of Yellowstone National Park. The Standard Package included 18 either-sex licenses in HD 385 over three time periods and 26 either-sex licenses in HD 395 for a total of 44 licenses and the Liberal Package could have added 100 additional cow/calf licenses to the hunting districts. If 60 or more bison were within a specific district; a second-choice drawing was used to develop lists of hunters who might receive cow/calf licenses. The 2007 season included a DVD mailing and test to license and potential license holders and matched state-issued licenses with the same number of Tribal Treaty licenses split between the Nez Perce and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes,

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which were in addition to state-issued Tribal licenses. The 2007 bison season structure was again proposed and was adopted for 2009, 2010 season and 2011 with the addition of archery and mandatory archery orientation, along with an expanded hunt area. The 2012 and 2013 seasons were finalized in February 2012 and have remained unchanged. Montana's 2013 license quotas are proposed to remain the same at 44 either sex licenses, 18 in HD 385 and 26 in HD 395; and 54 in HD 385 and 46 in HD 395 additional cow/calf licenses issued incrementally if conditions warrant. Of the 44 either sex licenses, 16 licenses are issued to Montana Tribes per state law. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai, Nez Perce, Umatilla, and Shoban have asserted Treaty hunting rights, and have stated intentions to hunt bison in the same areas outside Yellowstone National Park but have not committed to any limit. Public comment will run through Monday, July 22 with final adoptions at the August 8 meeting.

Action: Commissioner Tourtlotte moved and Commissioner Stuker seconded to adopt the proposed 2013 bison license quotas as presented by FWP.

Director Hagener commented there are four Treaty Tribes that harvest Bison in the Yellowstone area and last year in particular they harvested four times more than what is allowed for Montana harvests and other cow/calf license holders are complaining they are not getting their opportunity to hunt because of this. Meeting is scheduled in July with the Tribes to discuss the situation.

Chairman Vermillion stated he has received complaints about how the hunts have been carried out.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Commissioner Stuker asked what the quota limits are for the Tribes.

Pauley stated there are no limits.

Director Hagener stated the Department has tried, but no agreement has ever been made.

Motion Carried.

16. Elk Harvest Prescriptions in Archery Elk Units – Proposed

George Pauley, Wildlife Game Management Bureau Chief explained in February 2008, the FWP Commission adopted new either-sex elk archery permit regulations in 7 Missouri River Breaks HD and 23 additional HD outside the Breaks where either-sex rifle permits were already in place. During the 2010-2011 season setting process, this structure was maintained except in one HD 441. While public comment was less divided than in 2008, public debate continued into the 2011 legislature and FWP assembled two different working groups to review this topic. Prompted by continued debate and final recommendations of the second working group, the FWP Commission again modified elk archery regulations in these districts for the 2012 and 2013 hunting seasons. This final adoption increased either-sex elk archery permit levels, removed HDs 420 and 455 requiring permits and bundled all permits in the 21 districts outside the Breaks. The increased permits were adopted in pursuit of increased hunter access to cow elk to achieve management objectives. Reflecting the second working group's performance-based concept, the adoption included flexibility to modify regulations based on annual review of harvest relative to management objective(s) and requires review and adoption of annual harvest prescriptions. The FWP Commission adopted prescriptions for the 2012 hunting season and were achieved in 6 hunting districts, portions of districts, or hunting district groups; harvests were below prescription in the remaining 15 areas. FWP anticipated that objectives would not be met early on, and additional efforts and adjustments would be required to ultimately achieve harvest prescriptions. The original intent was to reach objectives over a six-year timeframe. Enhanced efforts will be made to communicate any final harvest prescriptions prior to the hunting season. Post season assessment of estimated harvest relative to these prescriptions would take place in May 2014 and would utilize winter population surveillance and harvest surveys. Public comment will run through Monday, July 22 with final adoption at the August 8 meeting.

2013 ANTLERLESS ELK HARVEST PRESCRIPTIONS - OUTSIDE MISSOURI BREAKS							
CURRENT	2012	2013					
HDs	POP OBJECTIVE ELK OBSERVED	5 YR AVE EST ANTLSS HVST PRIOR TO LAST HUNTING SEASON (2007 - 2011)	2012 POP SIZE ELK OBSERVED	2012 ANTLERLESS HARVEST PRESCRIPTION FOR LISTED HD OR PORTION OF HD	2012 EST ANTLERLESS HARVEST	2013 POP SIZE ELK OBSERVED	2013 ANTLERLESS HARVEST PRESCRIPTION FOR LISTED HD(S) OR PORTION OF HD
401/403	280 - 420	36	474	50	35	558	50
450	75 - 100	15	403	50	15	328	50
411/511/530	640 - 920	176	2,771	375	231	3,971	375
426	75	27	52	25	18	52(no svy)	25
412	240 - 360	62	919	150	55	858	150
447	560 - 840	111	1,326	300	69	1,512	300
500/570	100	37	273	45	64	404	45

502/510 W OF HWY 310	50	7	88	15	35	81	16
520 S & E OF W FK OF ROCK CREEK	200	17	230	35	8	289	38
575 EAST OF STILLWATER RIVER	150	35 (Entire HD)	171	25	35 (Entire HD)	195	42
575 WEST OF STILLWATER RIVER	150	SEE 575 E. OF STILLWATER RIVER	535	80	35 (Entire HD)	516	145
580 SOUTH OF SWEETGRASS CRK	225	173 (ENTIRE HD)	972	110	165 Entire HD (Estimate 58 antlerless elk from permit area 580 S. of Sweetgrass Crk)	1,033	110 (Permit area South of Sweetgrass Creek)
590/701 Bull MTNS	750	181 (Entire HD)	1,387	225	324 (Entire HD)	1,387	260
590/701 PINE RIDGE	300	SEE 590/701 BULL MTNS	435	45	324 (Entire HD)	407	48
702	500	30	846	50	105	300	50
704	SEE HD 702	75	SEE HD 702	115	94	1,027	115
705	SEE HD 702	21	SEE HD 702	45	23	415	45
2013 ANTERLESS ELK HARVEST PRESCRIPTIONS – MISSOURI BREAKS							
CURRENT	2012	2013					
HDs	POP OBJECTIVE ELK OBSERVED	5 YR AVE EST ANTLSS HVST PRIOR TO LAST HUNTING SEASON (2007 - 2011	2012 POP SIZE ELK OBSERVED	2012 ANTLERLESS HARVEST PRESCRIPTION FOR LISTED HD OR PORTION OF HD	2012 EST ANTLERLESS HARVEST	2013 POP SIZE ELK OBSERVED	2013 ANTLERLESS HARVEST PRESCRIPTION FOR LISTED HD(S) OR PORTION OF HD
410	2000 - 2300	195	3,248	300	228	3,248(no svy)	300
417	350 - 400	62	569	85	60	733	85
620/621/622	1400 - 1650	445	1,935	400	224	no survey	350
700	200 - 300	196	1,382	205	394	1,383-2012	205

Action: Commissioner Stuker moved and Commissioner Tourtlotte seconded to adopt the proposed 2013 elk harvest prescriptions as presented by FWP.

Commissioner Wetsit asked why there are 50 less licenses being proposed in HD 620.

Pauley explained the numbers represent harvests not permits. Region 6 has been successful in bringing the herd down toward objective and at a point where the harvest can be reduced.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Don Stein, Havre, asked with no survey for HD 620, 621 and 622, does it make it difficult to make a decision? Stated he heard the elk did not return after the winter season; asked if he heard correctly.

Mark Sullivan, Region 6 Wildlife Manager explained currently, there is a elk research project in progress and some of the elk that were radio collared in February, crossed the river and did not return; at this time not sure why. Only conduct a survey every other year due to the expense, very time consuming.

Commission Wetsit questioned where the elk were going.

Sullivan explained unknown at this time; once the survey is complete in approximately two years, they will have data in determining where the elk are heading.

Motion Carried.

17. HD 304 Big Horn Sheep Closure – Final

George Pauley, Wildlife Game Management Bureau Chief explained the bighorn sheep population in HD 304 is experiencing a pneumonia die-off, with a 35 percent decline in the population due to mortalities between mid-February and late March, 2013. Only two mature rams were observed on a recent survey. Hunting opportunity is very limited and will likely decline further due to additional mortality and because the season structure provides an either-sex license, the successful applicant would have the option of harvesting a ewe. In the midst of a die-off, allowing ewe harvest is not biologically justified and is not likely to be viewed favorably by sportsmen and other public. This proposed closure was discussed with the Park County Rod & Gun Club; directors of the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation and the National Wild Sheep Foundation; and with a number of local sportsmen and landowners and all support the closure. The formal public comment period ended May 27; six comments were received that demonstrated some support the proposal

Action: Commissioner Stuker moved and Commissioner Tourtlotte seconded to adopt the final closure of the bighorn sheep hunt in HD 304, as presented by FWP.

Chairman Vermillion stated this is concerning, unfortunate and disturbing trend for bighorn sheep in Montana.

Motion Carried.

8. Open Microphone – Public Opportunity to Address FWP Issues Not on Agenda

Curtis Helvey, Helena, opposed to trapping, disagrees with the May 30 Helena IR article regarding trapping.

Jeff Hockett, Havre, Block Management participant, appreciative for having meeting in Havre, disagrees with cost of Milk River purchase; upset with the Department and not sure if he wants to continue working with the Department.

Larry Johnson, Kremlin, questioned the Milk River appraisal, wants facts backed up.

Don Stein, Havre, asked the Department to consider having a weapons restricted area an (inaudible) area.

Director Hagener recommend Mr. Stein discuss the problem with the Regional biologist or warden regarding the problem.

Dan Redding, Rudyard, recommends not increasing fees on hunting licenses; use money wiser.

Kody Peterson, Kremlin, questioned the handling of the Fresno WMA and asked for explanations.

Chairman Vermillion asked Mark Sullivan and Scott Hemer to discuss/answer Mr. Peterson questions.

David Aageson, former Milk River Ranch owner, gave a lengthy talk on the history, science and facts regarding the Milk River; one of a kind piece of land.

Chairman Vermillion commented the Department and Commission's goals and opportunities with communities in Montana.

Bob Siversten, Havre, commented on values, actions and different ranches bought by the Department.

Chairman Vermillion motioned and Commissioner Tourtlotte seconded to adjourn the meeting. Motion Carried.

The meeting adjourned at 12:21 p.m.

Dan Vermillion, Chairman

M. Jeff Hagener, Director